

What is claimed is

1 1. An input device comprising:
2 one or more buttons on each of which an image is appearing;
3 a button-pressing detecting unit operable to detect a
4 button-pressing operation; and
5 a button-image changing unit operable to change an image
6 appearing on at least one of the buttons when the
7 button-pressing detecting unit detects the button-pressing
8 operation.

1 2. The input device of Claim 1, wherein
2 the button-image changing unit changes an image
3 appearing on a button that has been pressed via the
4 button-pressing operation detected by the button-pressing
5 detecting unit.

1 3. The input device of Claim 1, wherein
2 the button-image changing unit changes an image
3 appearing on a button other than a button that has been pressed
4 via the button-pressing operation detected by the
5 button-pressing detecting unit.

1 4. The input device of Claim 1, further comprising
2 one or more display panels that are placed behind the

3 one or more buttons,

4 wherein each button is at least partially made from one
5 of a transparent material and a semi-transparent material,
6 and

7 the button-image changing unit changes an image
8 displayed on the one or more display panels, to change the
9 image appearing on the at least one of the buttons.

1 5. The input device of Claim 4, further comprising
2 one or more display panels that are placed behind the
3 one or more buttons,

4 wherein each button is at least partially made from one
5 of a transparent material and a semi-transparent material,
6 and

7 the button-image changing unit changes an image
8 displayed on the one or more display panels, to change the
9 image appearing on the at least one of the buttons.

1 6. The input device of Claim 4, further comprising
2 a transparent touch panel that is placed on the one or
3 more display panels so as to be positioned between the one
4 or more display panels and the one or more buttons; and
5 an elastic member that is placed between the transparent
6 touch panel and the one or more buttons to space the touch
7 panel and the one or more buttons,

8 wherein the pressing-operation detecting unit detects
9 the button-pressing operation by the touch panel detecting
10 a pressure generated by deformation of the elastic member.

1 7. The input device of Claim 4, wherein
2 the one or more display panels are placed, in one-to-one
3 correspondence, behind the one or more buttons, and
4 the corresponding display panel and button are bonded
5 together.

1 8. The input device of Claim 4, wherein
2 the button-image changing unit includes:
3 a correspondence storing unit operable to store therein
4 information about correspondence of each button, a processing
5 program, and an image; and
6 a button-processing analyzing unit operable to
7 (a) execute a processing program corresponding to a
8 button that has been pressed via the button-pressing
9 operation,
10 (b) redefine the correspondence of each button, a
11 processing program, and an image, and
12 (c) display, in accordance with the redefined
13 correspondence, images on the one or more display panels in
14 such a manner that an image corresponding to each button
15 appears on the corresponding button.

1 9. The input device of Claim 10, further comprising:
2 a change-information obtaining unit operable to obtain
3 information to be used for changing the correspondence; and
4 a correspondence changing unit operable to change the
5 correspondence using the information obtained by the
6 change-information obtaining unit.

1 10. The input device of Claim 1, wherein
2 the image appearing on each button includes an image
3 of a character.

1 11. A computer program that enables an input device to
2 execute an image switching process of switching images
3 appearing on buttons of the input device, the image switching
4 process comprising:

5 a button-pressing detecting step of detecting pressing
6 of a button; and

7 a button-image changing step of changing an image that
8 is appearing on a button.